

But what if Tony Abbott is just an idiot?

By Lyn Bender

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Lyn Bender asks the important question: What if Tony Abbott is not, in fact, evil but is just, simply, an idiot?

REMEMBER THE FAIRY TALE [The Emperor's New Clothes](#)?

Cunning swindlers sold an Emperor cloth that could not be seen, because it wasn't there.

As the Emperor paraded naked in his new clothes – cut from the invisible cloth – none dared voice that they could not see the glorious new suit. The myth had been promoted, that any who could not see the clothes were unfit and stupid. Only when an

innocent child exclaimed the truth – as children will – that the Emperor was naked did the others dare concur.

Then the cry went out. Derision and mockery ensued.

Domestically and globally, the Abbott Government seems increasingly exposed and bare. When will the general populace give voice to this truth?

Internationally, Abbott's notoriety has spread like wildfire.

Abbott has ['irritated'](#) Indonesia with his 'stop the boats!' commands. As well as this, he has been lackadaisical in his response to the [Edward Snowden](#) leaked documents and their revelations. Australia had intercepted the mobile phone conversations of Indonesian President [Susilo Bambang Yudhoyono](#) and his wife. The Indonesian's signalled that they were highly offended. [Abbott's reply](#), did not soothe. Instead he seemed to throw oil on the fire, adding insult to injury. Nor has his initial (post-election) strategy of [silence](#) and no comment worked for him in complex foreign relations. Especially when he specifically excluded the [Indonesian media](#) from a press conference given on their own soil.

The [French media](#) has declared, soon after Abbott was elected:

'Sexiste et beauf : voici Tony Abbott, nouveau premier ministre australien'

This is [defined](#) here:

Beauf [pronounced /bof/] is a French term describing a man perceived as vulgar, unintelligent, arrogant, uncaring, misogynist and [chauvinistic](#), without any taste for etiquette or good manners. A "beauf" will typically be prompt to jump to conclusions and have strong views on complex social issues, based on an insufficient analysis of the facts, but presented as being plain common sense.

Tony Abbott may well be out of his depth — not waving, but flailing about.

Being promoted beyond a level of competence to the point of incompetence is common to many who rise to the top in a hierarchy.

The [Peter](#) Principle – enunciated by [Dr Lawrence Peter](#) – describes the dogged employee who, through sheer perseverance, gains steady promotion until he arrives at his level of incompetence. Or, as has been stated more succinctly — [cream rises](#) until it sours.

Might this apply to our recently elected prime minister, Tony Abbott?

Viewed solely in terms of his history of climbing the political ladder, Tony Abbott has succeeded where many predicted he would fail. He has achieved his elevation despite being generally and consistently unpopular. This was reported even in his earliest political days, at Sydney University. As [president](#) of the Student Representative Council, Abbott expressed views that were loathed by many of the students he was meant to represent. He was vociferously heckled on campus.

As one commentator wrote, at 22, he was sounding like a 'young fogey'. His rigidly held non-progressive views were already apparent.

He stated: universities should abolish useless

courses, such as feminism, and that women were inherently suited to do more housework while men more suited to dig ditches.

A similar stance of the older Abbott is described in former Prime Minister Julia Gillard's famous [misogyny speech](#).

But Abbott has metamorphosed since his student days into an older fogey. His ideas have since calcified and fossilised — on [women, same sex](#) marriage, [abortion](#), poverty and [homelessness](#).

Abbott achieved the leadership of the Liberal Party with the skinny margin of a [single vote](#), and has [lied](#), [yelled](#), [pleaded](#) and [jeered](#) with, at, and through anything that has stood in his way in order to become Australia's [28th prime minister](#). He was aided and abetted by the [Murdoch](#) media, [a coterie](#) of shock jocks and various reactionary [supporters](#), who are also backers of the extreme right wing think tank the [IPA](#) — the Institute of Public Affairs.

But since – and before – his victory, Abbott has often appeared increasingly [befuddled](#), bemused, [inconsistent](#) and bewildered. Having got to the pinnacle, his face betrays the mind of a man wondering:

Hell, [what do I do now](#)!?

When he is not slipping into a forgetful mode, castigating the opposition, as though his party is not yet the new government, he grasps at his old explanations, mantras and [slogans](#).

He is [scrapping](#) the carbon tax, stopping the [boats](#), while also blaming the ALP for a '[budget emergency](#)'.

Like a weary parent or grumpy old uncle, Abbott declares his "grown up" Government will have its work cut out just repairing the damage wrought by the fiscally infantile ALP.

But [watch them](#) here being grown up in

opposition, [here](#) and [here](#).

But that was then and this is now.

Tony Abbott has declared that the new government is comprised of a bunch of “*grown ups*” and will now [carefully](#) and methodically implement its mandate — which the Opposition should not oppose. And this, despite Abbott having declared, whilst in Opposition, that the job of the opposition is to [oppose](#).

There is another slogan that Abbott has insidiously inserted into his speech:

“The carbon tax was [socialism masquerading as environmentalism](#).”

That is, a price on carbon is two very bad things.

To Abbott, wealth redistribution and the epithet of [‘socialism’](#) constitutes a stand alone critical argument.

But Abbott declares climate change is not exactly [crap](#) any more — just not that much of an issue etc. And of course, Abbott also managed to offend [Christiana Figueres](#), the head of the United Nations climate change negotiations.

Meanwhile, under cover of darkness, Abbott and his crew are busy hacking at and signing away the previous government’s reforms.

[Mining](#) is getting the biggest green light ever given in Australia despite environmental concerns. Even going to the point of endangering Australia’s beloved [Great Barrier Reef](#) by a massive coal port expansion.

Alongside these actions, Tony Abbott seems to have little capacity for [empathy](#) or for understanding the suffering of others. He snubbed and accused dying Bernie Banton –

an asbestos cancer sufferer – of performing ‘a stunt’, when Banton arrived at a prearranged time, to present a petition to Abbott at his office. He was asking for assistance to obtain expensive drugs for fellow asbestos disease sufferers. Abbott was then the health minister in John Howard’s Government.

Another now infamous lack of empathy was shown with his [“shit happens”](#) response while discussing o the death of a soldier with bereaved fellow soldiers.

In his book – significantly titled [Battlelines](#) – Tony Abbott reveals his attention to a chessboard strategy for achieving his goals. These goals are about winning the battle. There is no utopian vision for a noble society. Nor is there much indication of credible care for others let alone the world or future generations. It is predominantly, about tactics, and winning. Above all, it is about *Tony* and *Tony winning*.

He states in *Battlelines* about Sydney University Professor [Lauchlan Chipman](#) that:

“Chipman’s legal philosophy courses were the only ones, I am now sorry to say, that I didn’t approach in the intellectually corrosive spirit of – tell us what we need to know to pass the exam.”

Abbott announces his credo early in the book as being:

‘To love God with all your heart and to love your neighbour as yourself.’

For Tony, who exhibits time and time again a failure to walk in another’s shoes, this is a hollow declaration. If Abbott’s preoccupations are as [narcissistically](#) obsessed as they seem, there is little room to love another as himself.

Tony comes first, always.

He has asked Australians to judge him by his deeds not just by what he says. What he says and what he does are often contradictory.

He has copiously praised the value of science when presenting the prime ministers' [prizes](#) for science. Yet, almost simultaneously, he cut funds to the [CSIRO](#) — Australia's premier scientific research organisation.

Abbott's deeds have thus far revealed an incompetent shifty self focused leader, with few leadership qualities other than that of the pugilist.



(Image via [Herald Sun](#))

The values conveyed in his deeds synchronise with his espoused beliefs.

These include:

That success is a mark of a person's deserving and having worked for money education and power. Tony does not recognise that there is not a level playing field.

The poor have chosen to remain at the bottom, by drinking, gambling and smoking. The hardworking rich, who thus accumulate wealth, should not be expected to subsidise the poor.

Climate change is not anything we need to do anything about. He has little respect for science and possibly a creationist view of the world.

He surrounds himself with the [likeminded](#) who

will enunciate his [agendas](#) for him. For example, the new chairman of Abbott's Business Advisory Council, [Maurice Newman](#), is an unyielding climate denier. Or Environment Minister [Greg Hunt](#) denying in a BBC interview that Tony Abbott ever called the science of climate change "*crap*".

If fighter Tony doesn't like the message, he [shoots](#) it.

Abbott portrays people who are asking for help and fleeing persecution, not as vulnerable refugees, but as [illegal](#) invaders. He sees no need to be obligated to future generations or that we have much 'responsibility' to [poorer countries](#).

The obvious question is: how would Abbott wish to be treated if he were poor, sick, disabled, black, a refugee, or he had inherited a trashed, uninhabitable, environment?

Doing unto others as you would have them do unto you requires a capacity to understand the suffering of others and their point of view.

Tony actually seems to renounce what he sees as weakness or vulnerability. He promotes a [hard masculinity](#), which identifies harshness as strength and compassion as a [soft and a](#) weakness.

He values what he calls a '*muscular Christianity*'.

Abbott therefore has no desire to give any 'handouts' — which is what as he considers welfare to be. It looks as if [Medicare](#) may also be in his sights. There is now a proposal to end bulk billing and charge a \$6 government fee for all GP consultations. This will effectively end a guarantee of health care, when needed, to all — including the very poor.

[Doris Lessing](#), the Nobel Prize winning novelist, has explored fitness to rule in her [novella](#) '*The Reason for It*'. It is one of four

short novels, first published in 2003.

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The story unfolds through a manuscript uncovered in a later archaeological dig.

Two seeds of destruction are revealed in the fate of the lost civilisation the writing portrays. The ancient city has been governed by an oligarchical council of twelve under an enlightened ruler, Destra. This woman, reputed to be possessed of great beauty and wisdom, has inherited the right to rule from the early death of her tyrant husband. The new civilisation flourishes in peace and harmony, with food and education for all and arts and culture.

Upon her death, the council chooses her son, De Rod, as her successor. DeRod abolishes storytelling and song – which had been the conduit of wisdom and knowledge – in favour of [militarism](#). The civilisation is then slowly eroded and prosperity is lost. DeRod discovers an earlier city beneath their own and fails to read the warning in this. If that city has fallen, possibly due to a volcanic eruption, so could theirs.

The writer of the manuscript finally realises that, despite his seemingly cruel destructive reign, DeRod could not be imputed to have had an ill intent. He simply did not know what he was doing. He did not recognise what had been good.

He was, in fact, an idiot.

NEW WOUND UP!

The originals of [John Graham's art](#), featured in this piece as well as elsewhere on IA, are available for purchase by contacting managing editor David Donovan at editor@independentaustralia.net.